

The final point I want to make is, among the great questions—there are five or six great questions which will determine what the world will look like 30 or 40 years from now. One of those great questions is, how will Russia and China, the two great former Communist powers, define their greatness in the next century? Will they define their greatness as we try to do, in terms of the achievements of our people, our ability to protect ourselves, and our ability to relate to other people? Or will they define—and I think that's a more modern definition, if you will—or will they define their greatness in terms of their ability to influence, if not outright dominate, the people that live around them as well as to control the political debate of people who live within their borders to a degree that I think is not helpful?

If that debate is resolved in the proper way, the 21st century is going to be a very good time for the American people. And I think when you hear all this stuff about NATO, you have to understand that there's two things going on. The Russians want to know, are we aggressive in NATO expansion or defensive, and looking at other targets like Bosnia? Then they're having to define in themselves, "Where do we want to be 25 or 30 years from now?"

And when they say things that we find offensive, I would ask the American people to understand their sensitivities. We were never invaded by Napoleon or Hitler, and they were. So they're a little sensitive about the prospects of their borders. And we're trying to work together for a better, brighter world.

I think that we're going to get there. I expect that the Helsinki meeting will be positive. But you should understand, this is a tough debate and that they have reasons in their own psyche and circumstances that make it a difficult one.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 137th news conference began at 2:02 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy Bernreith, Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of Oval Office Operations, and Bernard Rapoport, member, Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations.

Statement on the National Economy *March 7, 1997*

Today we learned that the economy is continuing to generate good jobs, almost 600,000 jobs in the first 2 months of this year alone. That's good news for American workers and their families. The American economy has now created nearly 12 million new jobs since I took office. Now it's time to keep this American job engine on the move by passing a balanced budget plan that invests in education and our future.

Our 1993 economic plan has helped spur this strong job growth, while cutting the deficit by 63 percent, from \$290 billion in 1992 to \$107 billion in 1996. Now we must cut the deficit to zero while investing in our people. My budget will do just that. I look forward to working with the Congress to get the job done by passing a balanced budget plan.

Proclamation 6978—National Older Workers Employment Week, 1997 *March 7, 1997*

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

American workers age 55 and older represent one of our country's richest resources, and the value of their potential contribution to our society is immense. An estimated 70 percent of all Americans age 55 and older already actively contribute to our common good—by working, by volunteering, and by caring for sick and disabled relatives, friends, and neighbors.

Despite their qualifications, however, many of these Americans experience serious difficulty finding work if they lose a job or desire new employment. Their search for employment can become increasingly challenging as they grow older.

Our laws and government agencies can—and do—offer protections, programs, and services for older workers. The Age Discrimination Act, the Older Americans Act, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act all recognize the unique rights of such employees, and the Department of Labor alone

helps thousands of workers each year through efforts such as the Senior Community Service Employment Program.

But it is up to employers also to recognize the potential of older Americans as employees—to recognize that by every common measure of job performance, older workers are as effective as younger people because of their unique skills, experiences, and judgment. And, it is appropriate that we designate a week to acknowledge that all workers should be judged and employed on the basis of their individual ability to do a job, regardless of age.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 9 through March 15, 1997, as National Older Workers Employment Week, and I urge all employers when they hire new workers to consider carefully the skills and other qualifications of men and women age 55 and older. I also encourage public officials responsible for job placement, training, and related services to intensify their efforts throughout the year to help older workers locate available jobs and training.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on March 11.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on Iraq

March 7, 1997

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1) and as part of my effort to keep the Congress fully informed, I am reporting on the status of efforts to obtain

Iraq's compliance with the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This report covers the period from January 7 to the present.

Saddam Hussein remains a threat to his people and the region. The United States successfully responded to the increased threat resulting from Saddam's attack on Irbil in late August 1996, but he continues to try to manipulate local rivalries in northern Iraq to his advantage. The United States and our coalition partners continue uninterrupted enforcement of the no-fly zone over northern Iraq under Operation Northern Watch, the successor mission to Operation Provide Comfort. France chose not to participate in Operation Northern Watch, but the United Kingdom and Turkey remain committed to the same enforcement of the no-fly zone above the 36th parallel that existed under Operation Provide Comfort. Enforcement of the southern no-fly zone also continues, and France remains engaged with our other coalition partners in conducting Operation Southern Watch.

Besides our air operations, we will continue to maintain a strong U.S. presence in the region in order to deter Saddam. U.S. force levels have returned to approximate pre-Operation Desert Strike levels, with land- and carrier-based aircraft, surface warships, a Marine amphibious task force, a Patriot missile battalion, and a mechanized battalion task force deployed in support of USCINCENT operations. On February 20, 1997, an air expeditionary force consisting of 30 F-16s and F-15s deployed to Doha, Qatar, to further strengthen the U.S. deterrent in the region. On February 22, an F-117 squadron deployed to Kuwait since last autumn was redeployed to the United States upon the completion of its mission. USCINCENT has completed the initial phases of Operation Desert Focus, with the relocation and consolidation of all combatant forces in Saudi Arabia into more secure facilities throughout Saudi Arabia. To enhance force protection throughout the region, additional military security personnel have been deployed for continuous rotation. USCINCENT continues to closely monitor the security situation in the region to ensure